



*Department of Health  
and Human Services*

*Maine People Living  
Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives*

*John E. Baldacci, Governor*

*Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner*

**Office of the Commissioner  
Environmental Quality Policy**

Policy # DHHS-35-08

Issue Date: 6/20/08

**I. SUBJECT**

Environmental Quality

**II. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Department has made a significant commitment over the past few years to improve the functionality and comfort of DHHS workplaces. New buildings, renovations, expansions, and upgrades have been provided in numerous areas around the state. The effort is ongoing and more employees will be moving to new or renovated space in the future.

**III. PROCEDURE STATEMENT**

**A. Heating, Ventilation and Air Condition Systems**

The majority of buildings occupied by DHHS employees have Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems. These systems have been installed to provide uniform temperatures throughout the building and to keep the temperature within a specified range that is monitored. This range considers both employee comfort and cost efficiency. HVAC systems are sensitive to differences in air temperature; personal space heaters and the opening and closing of windows tend to disrupt the normal working efficiency of the HVAC system. Space heaters may also overload an electrical circuit, trip breakers, and/or can be a fire hazard. For these reasons, windows within buildings with HVAC systems must remain closed, and space heaters are not permitted. [State-owned office buildings without HVAC systems are permitted to use only the specified space heater determined by the Bureau of General Services (Kozy Legs).]

**B. Plants and Flowers**

Air quality studies demonstrate that live plants can cause mold, allergies, and insect infestation; therefore, live plants may not be kept in DHHS offices. Delivered plants and flowers should be taken home at the end of the day. Artificial plants and flowers are acceptable.

**C. Chemical Compositions**

Chemical compositions in many agents (including fragrances found in personal care items) pose varying health risks to some people. Therefore, products such as perfumes, cologne, and heavily scented products such as air fresheners, scented candles, and potpourri should be used conservatively. In some cases, it may be necessary to prohibit such products altogether when the health of an individual may be compromised.

#### **D. Food and Beverages**

The Department has provided or is planning applanced lounges, supplemented by mini-lounges in the larger buildings, with dedicated air exhaust systems to remove food odors from the building and to prevent recirculation of the lounge air into the work areas. This is intended to improve air quality in our office locations. For this reason, in those buildings where this has been accomplished, all food preparation will be confined to the lounges. Coffee pots, microwaves, popcorn poppers, toasters, mini-roaster ovens, mini-refrigerators or other appliances will be located exclusively within the lounges.

Food and beverage may be consumed within individual workstations and offices. Employees are responsible for cleaning up after themselves, and food waste should be discarded in lined trash receptacles.

#### **E. Refrigerators**

Refrigerators are provided as a convenience for employees. It is suggested that items be labeled with a name and the date it is placed within the refrigerator and that consideration be used by limiting the number of items stored to ensure adequate room for everyone. Employees using the refrigerators are responsible for cleaning them and disposing of their perishable items at the end of each work week.

#### **F. Water Coolers**

Water coolers (free-standing systems with replaceable water tanks/bottles atop) will be located in designated lounge areas. In buildings where the number of staff, the capacity of the lounge, or the layout of the building are not conducive to locating the coolers within the lounge, placement in a mini-lounge may be appropriate. Business Managers and Office Managers will make the determination to place the cooler in a location other than the lounge.

#### **G. Pets**

Pets are not permitted in the workplace. The definition of "pet" includes all domestic and non-domestic animals, including fish, reptiles, and rodents. A service animal or assistive animal is not considered a pet and is welcome.

#### **H. Work Environment**

Employees are permitted to personalize their work environments with artwork, pictures, decorations, artificial plants, and other personal effects. Small brad nails, tacks, or picture hangers shall be used (in lieu of tape, screws, or larger nails) for items that are hung on wall surfaces. Employees are not permitted to paint their work environments without permission of the landlord and Director of Facilities Management.

Water-containing sculptures or decorations are not permitted in the workplace.

### **IV. DISTRIBUTION**

All employees will be notified via e-mail and provided the link to the website.

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June 20, 2008

Effective Date

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Brenda M. Harvey  
Commissioner